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Classified By: DCM Hugo Llorens for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Spanish MFA DG for Policy Rafael Dezcällar told DCM on April 17 that his recent trip to Afghanistan left him newly optimistic because NATO-ISAF is on the offensive and Afghan ministers and troops are starting to play a serious role. He said that the GOS will soon begin an initiative to tell its people about NATO's good work in Afghanistan. Based on his recent trip to Iran, which he said was coordinated with Javier Solana, Dezcällar said that he sees a moment of possibility for negotiations because advocates of political solutions have the upper hand both in Iran and in the US. When DCM raised the symbolic importance of Moratinos and other FMs at the Iraq Compact signing, Dezcällar said that Moratinos hadn't yet made a final decision on his participation, but that it would be awkward for Moratinos to attend on May 3 but then not be invited to the next day's Neighbors meeting.

12. (C) SUMMARY (cont'd) Dezcällar reiterated MFA's week-old message on the purpose of Foreign Minister Moratinos' trip to Cuba, inviting the US to "measure the results" and encouraging a private, ongoing US-Spain dialogue on Cuba. DCM explained the US concerns about the Cuba trip, telling Dezcällar that MFA should expect to hear more about this from future Washington visitors. Regarding Moratinos' recent swing through Central Asia as OSCE Chairman, Dezcällar said that Moratinos' comments on lifting EU sanctions on Uzbekistan were taken out of context but that Spain did believe that the sanctions are not useful. He said that Moratinos raised the need for Kazakhstan to implement real democratic reforms in order to assume the chairmanship in 12009. Finally, on Western Sahara, Dezcällar welcomed the upcoming visit of NEA DAS Gordon Gray and said that, with one minor difference - Spain prefers direct UN involvement - Spain and the US agree on the way forward. END SUMMARY.

-- AFGHANISTAN --

13. (C/NF) After spending five days in Afghanistan, Dezcällar said that he is more optimistic about the situation than he was after his last trip. He said that NATO-ISAF has the offensive, unlike last fall, and judged that both the Afghanistan's ministers and its army are becoming real forces. Dezcällar praised the Ministers of Education and

Rural Development, as well as the Minister of Defense, whose training program he said that Spain will help. He noted the importance of US efforts to train and equip the Afghan army, including a major military aid program, and said that he'd had a good meeting with ISAF commander GEN McNeil. (COMMENT:

Spanish CHOD GEN Sanz recently pulled aside the Ambassador at a social event to tell him that Spain is pleased with GEN McNeil, especially in comparison to his predecessor. END COMMENT). Dezcallar said that across Afghanistan he saw more infrastructure and more commerce, and said that while the situation is still difficult, it is improving. He said that the GOS will soon start a public diplomacy offensive, including an op-ed from the Spanish aid director, more press coverage of people who have worked in the Spanish PRT, and a conference in Barcelona to highlight the positive work of the PRT to help the public understand the good work that Spain is doing.

¶4. (C) DCM thanked Spain for its commitment to Afghanistan. He said that Post has heard from the FSO at the Spanish PRT that it is a model for civil-military cooperation. Dezcallar said that part of the purpose of his recent trip, on which he was accompanied by his MOD counterpart, was to demonstrate this unity of purpose between MFA, MOD, and the Spanish aid agency AECI. He said that he believes that the EU will begin providing training for the Afghan police, with a program would probably start small and then grow. Dezcallar said that Spanish troops had been involved in ISAF's recent offensive Operation Achilles, reinforcing the border between Nimroz and Farah provinces. He noted that while the career military and diplomatic officials had accepted the military rationale for Spanish participation in the operation, they had to work hard to convince President Zapatero.

-- IRAN --

¶5. (C) Dezcallar said that he had gone to Tehran principally to try to ensure stability in the Afghan provinces where Iran

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has influence and Spain has troops. He said that he had coordinated the trip with Javier Solana and the EU. Dezcallar said that the trip reminded him that the Iranian power structure is not monolithic. He said that recent signs, including the political resolution of the British Marines issue and the emptiness of Ahmadinejad's recent nuclear announcement, indicate to him that the pragmatists have the upper hand at the moment. Dezcallar said that there is a Swiss proposal on the table that calls for a 30-day discussion of terms followed by a six-month "timeout" that could involve the suspension of both Iranian activities and UN sanctions. If this proposal were to move forward, a possibility that Dezcallar termed "difficult," the next step would be a Larijani-Solana meeting. He said that the US would participate in discussions of this issue in London on May 2, noting that both recent US signs of flexibility and the Russian decision to suspend nuclear cooperation had help move Iran towards this potentially promising moment. DCM emphasized the US's willingness to talk to Iran at anytime, once Iran suspends its nuclear and enrichment activities, but said that meanwhile the international community needs to continue to pressure Iran and unify its commitment to ending Iran's nuclear activities. DCM also noted Post's encouragement of the Ministry of Economy to move faster to freeze the assets of Bank Sepah under UNSC 1747.

¶6. (C) On his conversations with Iran about Afghanistan, Dezcallar said that Iran is supporting both the anti-Karzai National Front and the Karzai government. On Lebanon, he said that Iran had reached an agreement with Saudi Arabia regarding the formation of a government that complied with UNSC 1711 and the format of elections, but that Iran was concerned that the US was blocking the agreement. Dezcallar had the sense from the Iranians that it would be hard to get the two Israeli soldiers released without this agreement. On the Palestinian Authority, he said that the Iranians were

insistent that the current government be recognized. On Iraq, Dezcällar said that the Iranians told him that they continue to strongly support PM Maliki and democracy, and blame "Iraq's neighbors" for the violence. Dezcällar said that he would be happy to have more detailed discussions about his trip with Undersecretary Burns or others in Washington or Europe. The DCM said he would pass on Dezcällar's offer.

-- INTERNATIONAL COMPACT WITH IRAQ --

¶7. (C) Per ref A, DCM discussed with Dezcällar the Secretary's message regarding the importance of FM Moratinos'

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attendance at the International Compact with Iraq (ICI) signing on May 3. Dezcällar said that Spain is committed to the future of Iraq, and that he himself had been involved in the early discussions of the ICI. While Moratinos has not yet decided if he will attend the signing, Dezcällar said that it would be awkward for the Minister to attend the signing but then leave while all his colleagues stayed to continue their discussions during the Neighbors' meeting on May 4 to which he had not been invited.

-- CUBA --

¶8. (C) Dezcällar, who accompanied Moratinos and Secretary of State for Latin America Trinidad Jimenez to Havana, reiterated the explanation that Jimenez made to DCM (ref B). He said that given Fidel's illness and the failure of EU sanctions, it was time for Spain to try something new. Dezcällar said that Fidel appears to have assumed a position of a "Queen Mother" and that Raul and other leaders seem ready for an evolution in Cuba's economic policy, following a path that is more Vietnam than China. He admitted that the trip hadn't immediately accomplished much for Spain, but said that through its new engagement, Spain would be able to exert influence and push for "Western values" as the Cuban transition advanced. Dezcällar said that the trip would have to be judged based on what happens in the future, and called for ongoing - discreet - coordination between the US and Spain.

¶9. (C) DCM emphasized Washington's deep disappointment with the trip, which was not only a surprise but even a bit of a spectacle as world power Spain's FM went to Cuba and came away with nothing. He noted that Moratinos didn't meet with dissidents, and didn't even try to correct the record when Cuban FM Perez Roque called the dissidents "mercenaries" in the pay of the US. DCM said senior US officials would continue to raise Cuba in future meetings with counterparts. Dezcällar insisted that while Moratinos had not met with

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dissidents during this trip, the GOS (DG Javier Sandomingo) had. He said that Spain has forced Cuba to accept that it will maintain a relationship not only with the Cuban government but with its people.

-- OSCE/MORATINOS IN CENTRAL ASIA --

¶10. (C) Regarding Moratinos' recent trip through six central Asian countries as OSCE chairman, DCM said that Washington was surprised by Moratinos' comments in support of lifting EU sanctions on Uzbekistan. Dezcällar said that he had not been on the trip, but that the comments were out of context. He said that EU's pressure on Uzbekistan had not been useful, in fact making life difficult for the German mission to Afghanistan, and that it was time to reconsider the sanctions. Separately, DCM reminded Dezcällar of the need to see real progress by Kazakhstan on implementing democratic reforms in order to be seriously considered for the 2009 OSCE chairmanship, and asked if Moratinos had made progress on that issue. Dezcällar said that Moratinos did raise the issue of reform, and referred DCM to DG for North America and

Europe Pons for more details on the trip.

-- WESTERN SAHARA --

¶11. (C) Laying the groundwork for NEA DAS Gordon Gray's upcoming visit, DCM reviewed ref C points on the way ahead for negotiations between Morocco and the Polisario over Western Sahara. Dezcollar said that the US and Spain are in agreement, except that Spain prefers that the UN be directly involved in the talks.

-- NEW YORK --

¶12. (C) Dezcollar said that he'd gone to New York to discuss the naming of Portuguese ex-president Sampaio as the UNSYG's High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations. He stressed that, while Spain originally preferred a candidate from the Middle East, Sampaio is well respected and has a good understanding of that part of the world. He noted that ultimately, it would be the UNSYG's choice, not Spain or Turkey's. Dezcollar asked if the Department had made a decision on which Alliance of Civilizations project it would support.

Aguirre